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# X-FACTOR

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# X-FACTOR

IN A SOCIETY WHERE MUTANTS AND FORMER MUTANTS ALIKE FEEL THREATENED BY THE WORLD AROUND THEM, THEY TURN TO THEIR FIRST, BEST LINE OF DEFENSE WHENEVER TROUBLE ARISES: X-FACTOR, THE PRIVATE DETECTIVE AGENCY FOUNDED BY MADROX, THE MULTIPLE MAN.

WHEN WE LAST LEFT OUR HEROES...



JAMIE MADROX, DESPERATELY DEALING WITH THE DIRE DEATH OF A DETROIT DETECTIVE DUPE, DISCOVERS THAT MUTANT TOWN IS UNDER SERIOUS SIEGE BY SQUADRONS OF AWESOMELY ARMED ARMY AVATARS. WHY, YOU WORRIEDLY WONDER? IT IS EXPLAINED THAT AN EXCESS OF EX-MUTANTS CALLED THE X-CELL HAVE EXPRESSED EXASPERATION WITH THE GOVERNMENT, COMPLETELY CONVINCED THAT THE CATASTROPHIC MUTANT POWER OUTAGE WAS A PERFIDIOUS, UNPARDONABLE PRESIDENTIAL PLOT.

TO THAT END, THEY HAVE WAGED WAR ON WARIOUS...SORRY, VARIOUS...TEMPTING TARGETS AND THUS ARE THEMSELVES TREATED AND TARGETED AS TERRORISTS, AND HAVE SOUGHT SEEMING SANCTUARY IN MUTANT TOWN, THEIR QUIXOTIC QUEST LEADING THEM QUICKLY TO QUICKSILVER. RAHNE AND RICTOR WRONGLY RESCUED AN X-CELL RANGER, AND THUS WERE ANGRILY ARRESTED BY THE AFOREMENTIONED ARMY. VAL COOPER HAS ORDERED A MUDDLED MADROX TO MAKE HASTE IN EXTRACTING THE X-CELL BEFORE MATTERS ESCALATE EXPONENTIALLY.

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TRUST. THAT'S WHAT  
RELATIONSHIPS COME  
DOWN TO.

HECK, THAT'S WHAT  
LIVING DAY-TO-DAY  
COMES DOWN TO...



...IN HUNDREDS  
OF LITTLE WAYS.

YOU TRUST THAT PEOPLE  
AREN'T GOING TO RUN RED  
LIGHTS AND HIT YOU IN THE  
CROSSWALK.



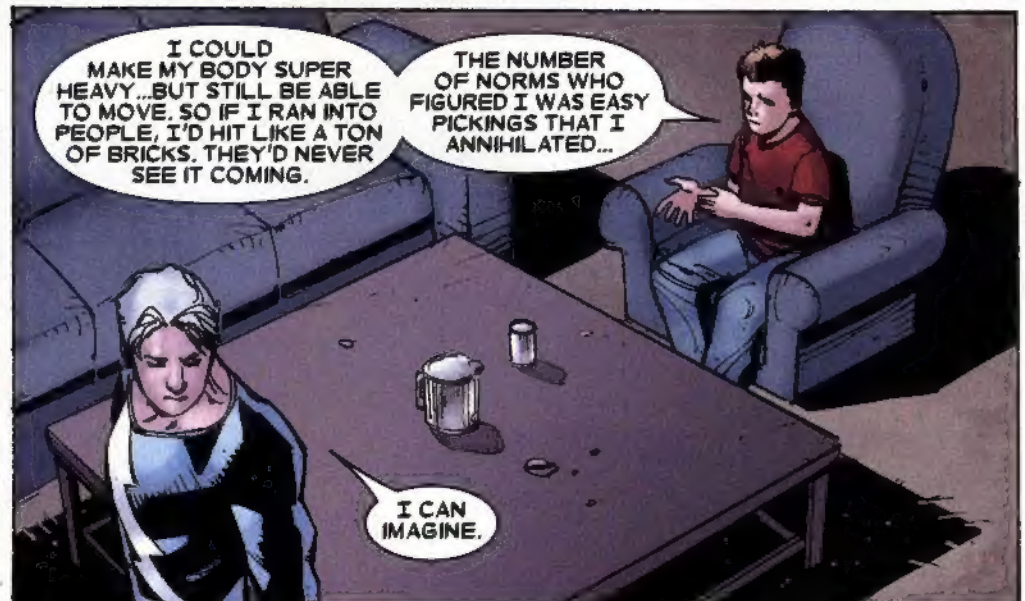
YOU TRUST THAT PEOPLE  
IN AUTHORITY AREN'T GOING  
TO ABUSE THAT AUTHORITY.



AND SOMETIMES, IT'S AS  
SIMPLE AS THAT YOU  
TRUST SOMEONE TO BE  
ABLE TO DO WHAT THEY  
SAY THEY CAN.



I USED TO  
BE AMAZING,  
Y'KNOW?



I COULD  
MAKE MY BODY SUPER  
HEAVY...BUT STILL BE ABLE  
TO MOVE. SO IF I RAN INTO  
PEOPLE, I'D HIT LIKE A TON  
OF BRICKS. THEY'D NEVER  
SEE IT COMING.

THE NUMBER  
OF NORMS WHO  
FIGURED I WAS EASY  
PICKINGS THAT I  
ANNIHILATED...

I CAN  
IMAGINE.





AND THE GOVERNMENT JUST TOOK IT ALL AWAY. THEY FIGURED WE WERE THREATS.

YOU'RE CERTAIN IT WAS THE GOVERNMENT, ELIJAH?

OF COURSE! AFTER EVERYTHING THAT'S HAPPENED SINCE, HOW CAN THERE BE ANY DOUBT?



M-DAY WAS STEP ONE, AND THE REGISTRATION ACT WAS STEP TWO.

AND MY PEOPLE AND I AREN'T GOING TO STAND AROUND WAITING TO FIND OUT WHAT THEY'VE GOT UP THEIR SLEEVES NEXT.

WE HAVE TO DO SOMETHING. SOMEBODY'S GOT TO.



THUS THE X-CELL.

RIGHT.

I CAN'T HELP BUT OBSERVE THAT THE GOVERNMENT ISN'T COOPERATING, CONSIDERING WE'RE UNDER SIEGE.



THAT'S WHY I CAME LOOKING FOR YOU.

I'VE LET THE OTHERS KNOW. THEY'RE HIDING OUT HERE IN MUTANT TOWN...BUT THEY'LL MAKE THEIR WAY HERE.

WORD ON THE STREET IS... YOU CAN HELP PEOPLE.



THE WORD IS TRUE... PROVIDED YOU'RE WORTHY.

ARE YOU?



HELL YES.





HELL NO.



CALLY!  
YOU MADE  
IT! I--

SHUT UP,  
ROSS!

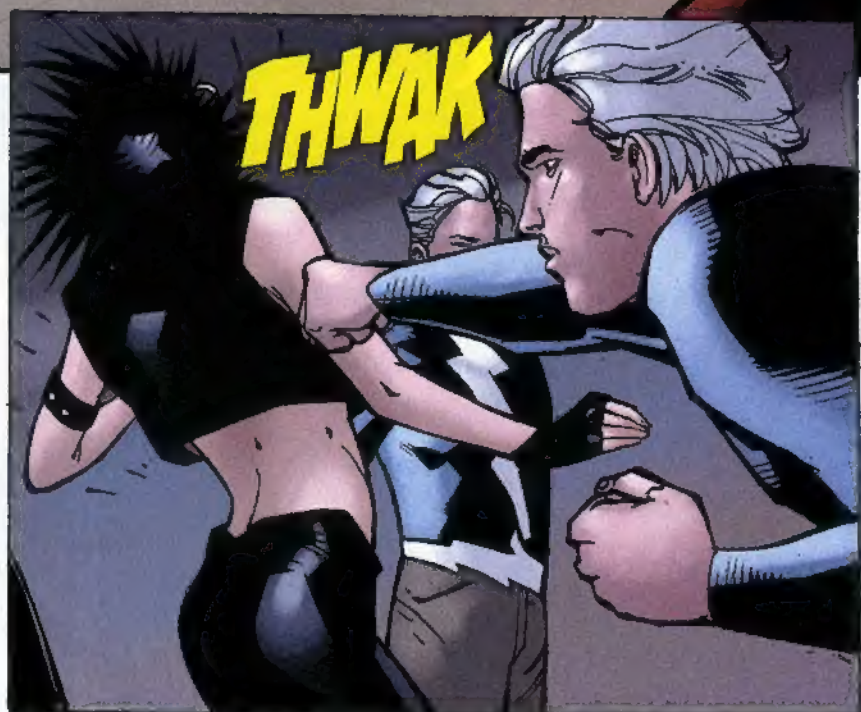
I SUGGEST  
YOU LET GO,  
CALLISTO.

AND I  
SUGGEST YOU  
GET READY TO  
GET YOUR BUTT  
HANDED TO  
YOU, YOU--



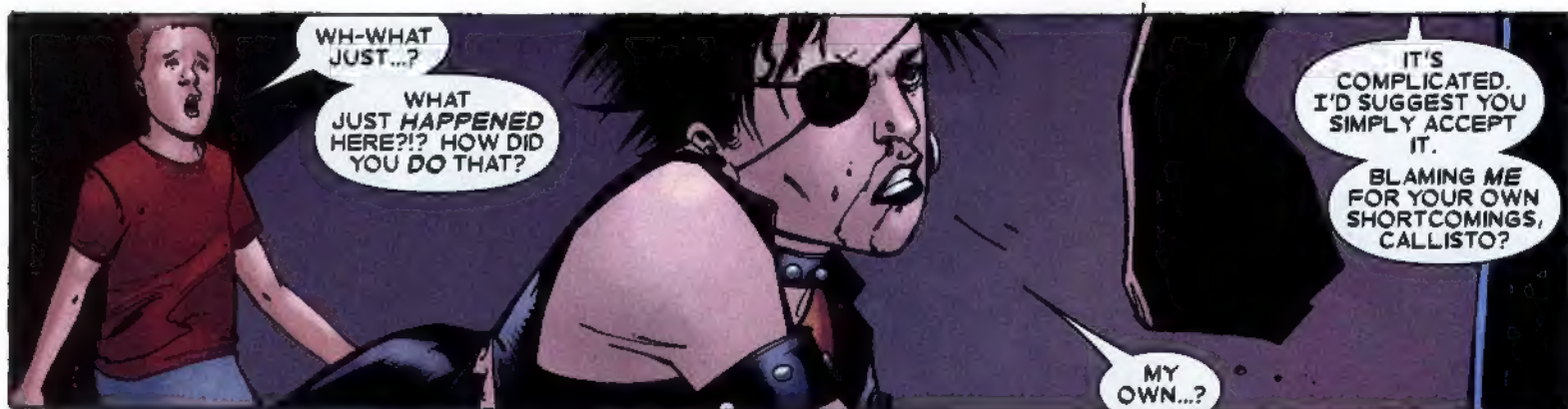
OOOOFF!

WHAM



THWAK





WH-WHAT JUST...?

WHAT JUST HAPPENED HERE?!? HOW DID YOU DO THAT?

IT'S COMPLICATED. I'D SUGGEST YOU SIMPLY ACCEPT IT.

BLAMING ME FOR YOUR OWN SHORTCOMINGS, CALLISTO?

MY OWN...?



AFTER YOU "HELPED" ME I WAS IN AGONY! MY SKIN WAS HYPERSENSITIVE! THE RAIN TOUCHED ME AND I THOUGHT I WAS GOING TO DIE! GOD, DEATH WOULD HAVE BEEN A BLESSING!

HOW IS THAT MY SHORT-COMINGS?



ON THE SURFACE OF IT... YOU WERE JUDGED UNWORTHY. STILL...

I SUPPOSE IT'S POSSIBLE THAT YOU WERE THE UNFORTUNATE VICTIM OF A SORT OF...LEARNING CURVE...THAT I AM EXPERIENCING.

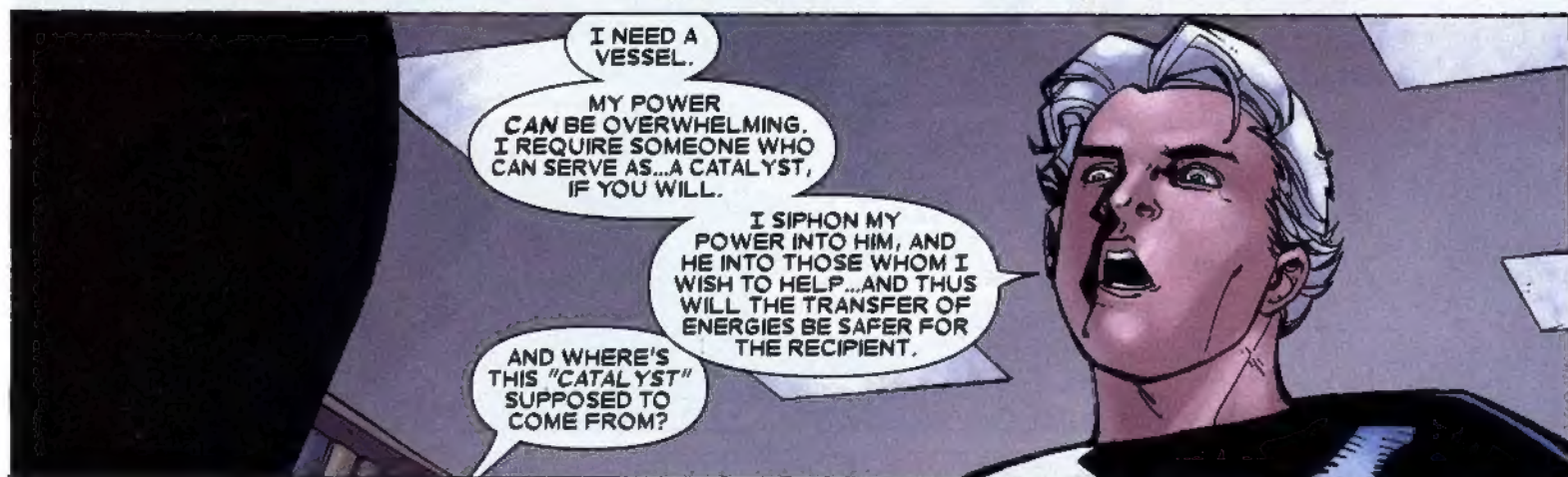
IF THAT IS THE CASE, YOUR...MISHAP... IS REGRETTABLE.



I DON'T UNDERSTAND. WHAT "LEARNING CURVE"?

LOOK, CAN YOU HELP MY PEOPLE OR NOT?

YES. BUT I HAVE GIVEN THE MATTER MUCH THOUGHT AND I BELIEVE THAT, IN ORDER TO ENSURE THE PROCESS IS MORE... REFINED...



I NEED A VESSEL.

MY POWER CAN BE OVERWHELMING. I REQUIRE SOMEONE WHO CAN SERVE AS...A CATALYST, IF YOU WILL.

I SIPHON MY POWER INTO HIM, AND HE INTO THOSE WHOM I WISH TO HELP...AND THUS WILL THE TRANSFER OF ENERGIES BE SAFER FOR THE RECIPIENT.

AND WHERE'S THIS "CATALYST" SUPPOSED TO COME FROM?



OH, TRUST ME...I HAVE SOMEONE IN MIND.





ALL RIGHT.  
ALL RIGHT, I'LL  
TELL YOU WHAT  
YOU WANT TO  
KNOW.



THAT'S  
MORE LIKE  
IT.

YOU'RE MAKING  
THE **RIGHT MOVE**,  
DECIDING TO COOPERATE  
WITH THE GOVERNMENT,  
MR. RICTOR.

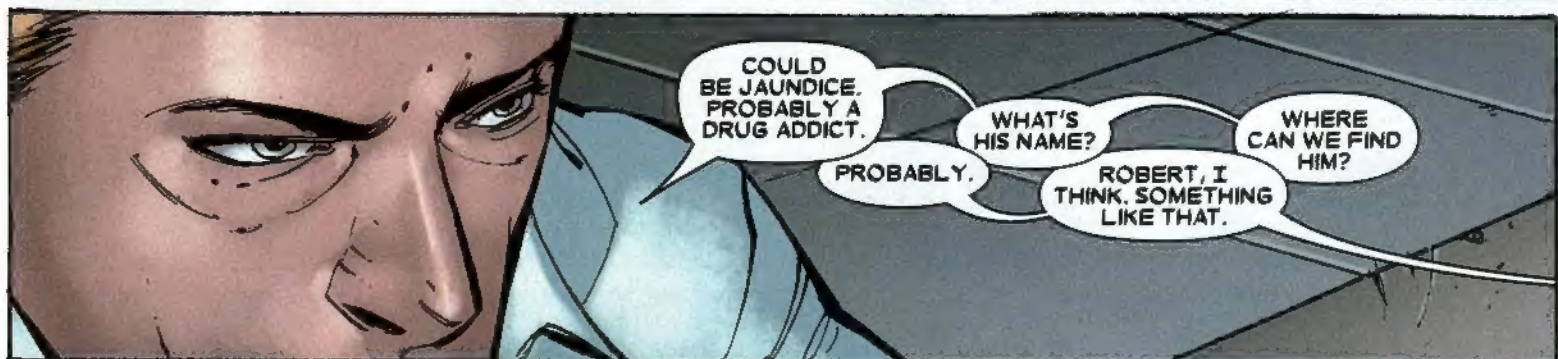


NOW...TELL  
US ABOUT YOUR  
CONTACTS WITH  
THE X-CELL.

I'VE ONLY  
EVER SEEN THE  
ONE GUY.

CAN YOU  
DESCRIBE  
HIM?

KIND OF  
A SQUARISH HEAD...  
LONG NOSE...  
WIDE, CRAZY EYES...  
YELLOWISH SKIN...



COULD  
BE JAUNDICE.  
PROBABLY A  
DRUG ADDICT.

WHAT'S  
HIS NAME?

WHERE  
CAN WE FIND  
HIM?

PROBABLY.

ROBERT, I  
THINK. SOMETHING  
LIKE THAT.



ALL I KNOW  
IS THAT HE SAID  
HE LIVES UNDER  
THE SEA.

UNDER  
THE--?

YEAH. IN A  
PINEAPPLE.



INTERESTING.





HEY, RICTOR. HOW THEY TREATING YOU?

MADROX. OH, THANK GOD.

AGENT FLYNN, THE SUSPECT IS BEING RELEASED TO MR. MADROX HERE.

DIRECTOR COOPER, WITH ALL RESPECT, WE WERE JUST STARTING TO MAKE PROGRESS HERE...

I BELIEVE YOU, BUT WE NEED MR. MADROX'S COOPERATION, AND MR. MADROX NEEDS HIS TEAM. SO MR. RICTOR IS SPRUNG FOR NOW, ALONG WITH MS. SINCLAIR.



AGENT CODY HERE WILL ESCORT YOU TO WHERE RAHNE'S ALREADY WAITING FOR YOU. AND YOU BETTER NOT SCREW THIS UP, MADROX.

WHEN HAVE I EVER?

DON'T GET ME STARTED.



SO WHAT HAVE YOU GOT?

HIS CONTACT MAN IS NAMED "ROBERT" AND HE CLAIMS TO LIVE IN A PINEAPPLE UNDER THE SEA. I'M FIGURING THAT'S CODE FOR A SECRET AQUATIC BASE.



HEY!

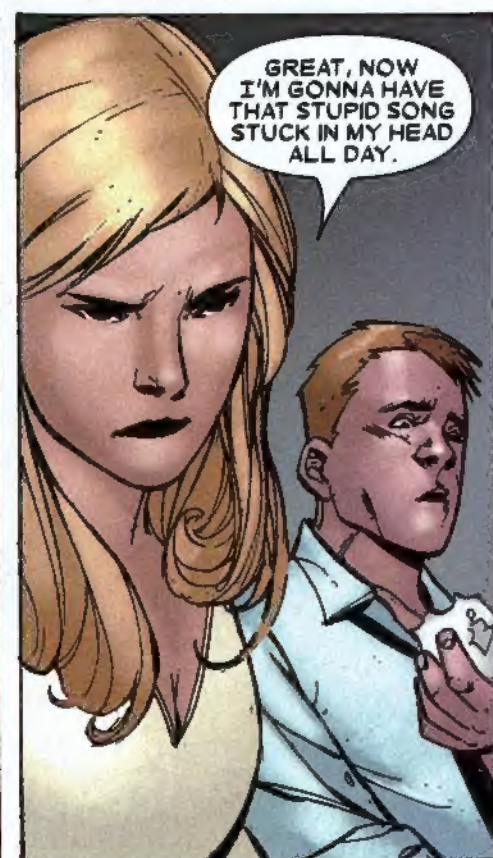
SHRIPPP



YOU DON'T HAVE ANY CHILDREN, DO YOU?

UH...NO. I'M MARRIED TO MY WORK.

FEEL FREE TO MAKE IT AN OPEN MARRIAGE.



GREAT, NOW I'M GONNA HAVE THAT STUPID SONG STUCK IN MY HEAD ALL DAY.





TRUST. BEING ABLE TO TAKE SOMEONE AT HIS OR HER WORD. IT'S WHAT MAKES US OR BREAKS US.

DON'T DROP ME!  
DON'T--



WILL YOU, FOR GOD'S SAKE, TRUST ME?

BUT...BUT YOU COULD FALL!

THAT'S NOT GOING TO HAPPEN.

HOW DO YOU KNOW? MY POWERS VANISHED WITHOUT WARNING. HOW DO YOU KNOW YOURS WON'T, TOO, AND WE'LL BOTH FALL TO OUR DEATHS?



WELL, I...

HOW?



...  
OKAY, QUIET TIME, NOW.

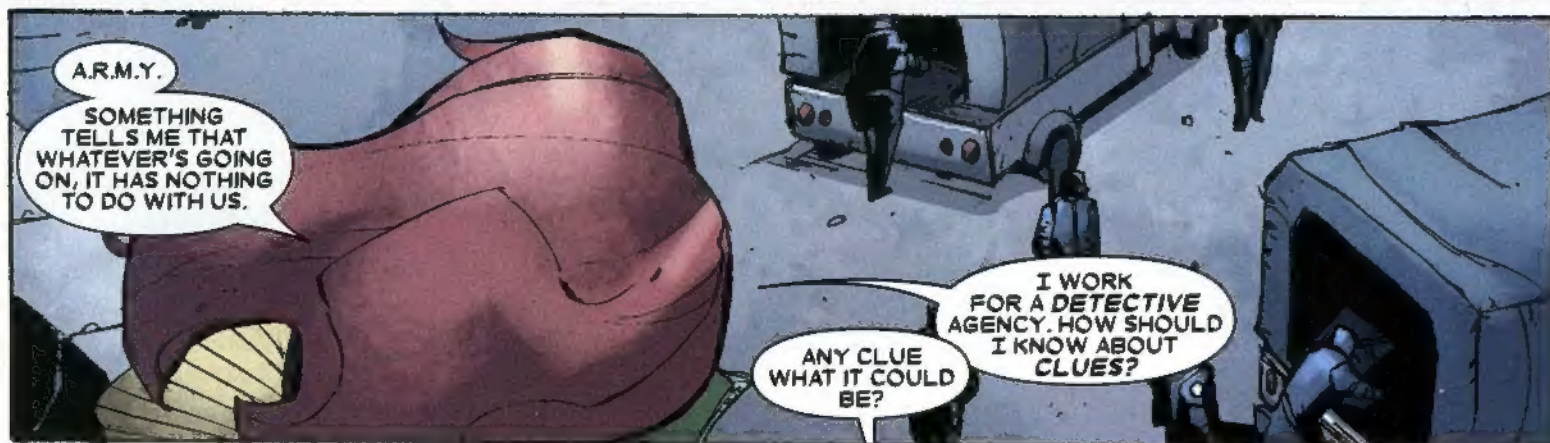


HOLY...!

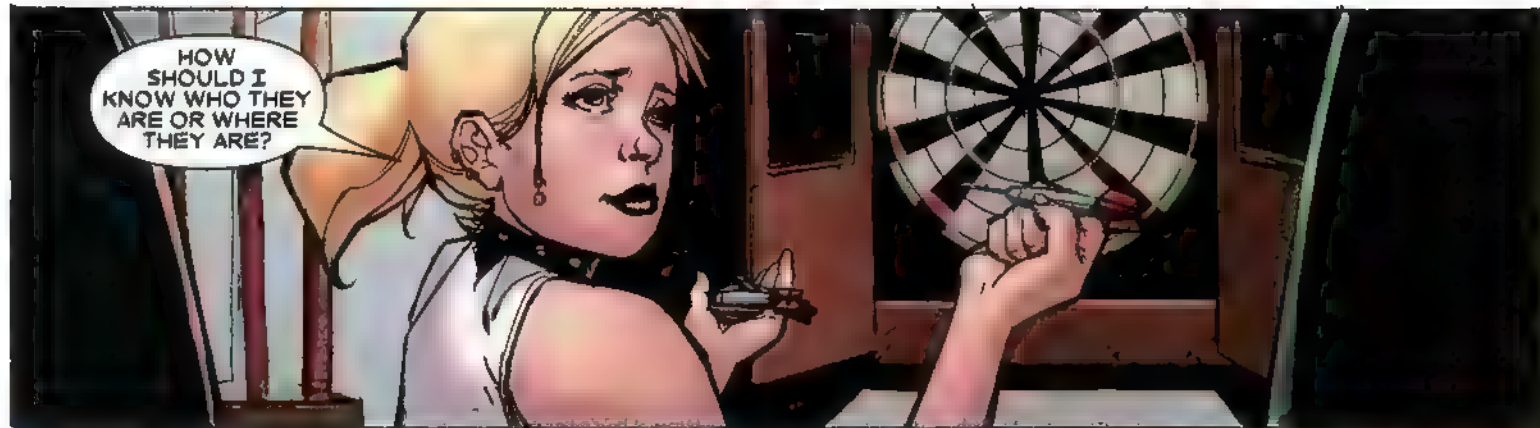
SIRYN, DO YOU SEE IT?

KIND OF HARD TO MISS.







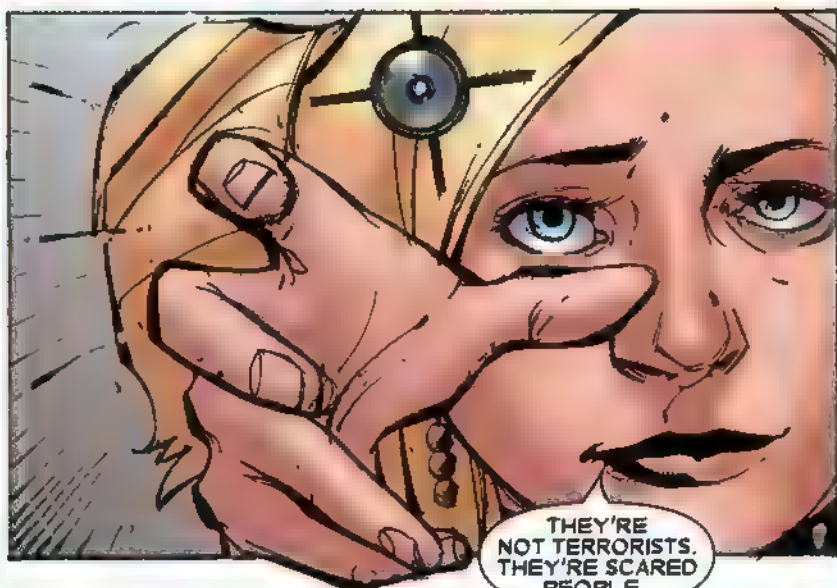


HOW SHOULD I KNOW WHO THEY ARE OR WHERE THEY ARE?



LAYLA...I DON'T HAVE TIME TO SCREW AROUND. VAL COOPER SURE WASN'T.

IF WE DON'T WANT MUTANT TOWN TURNED INTO A PARKING LOT, WE'VE GOT TO FIND THESE TERRORISTS.



THEY'RE NOT TERRORISTS. THEY'RE SCARED PEOPLE.



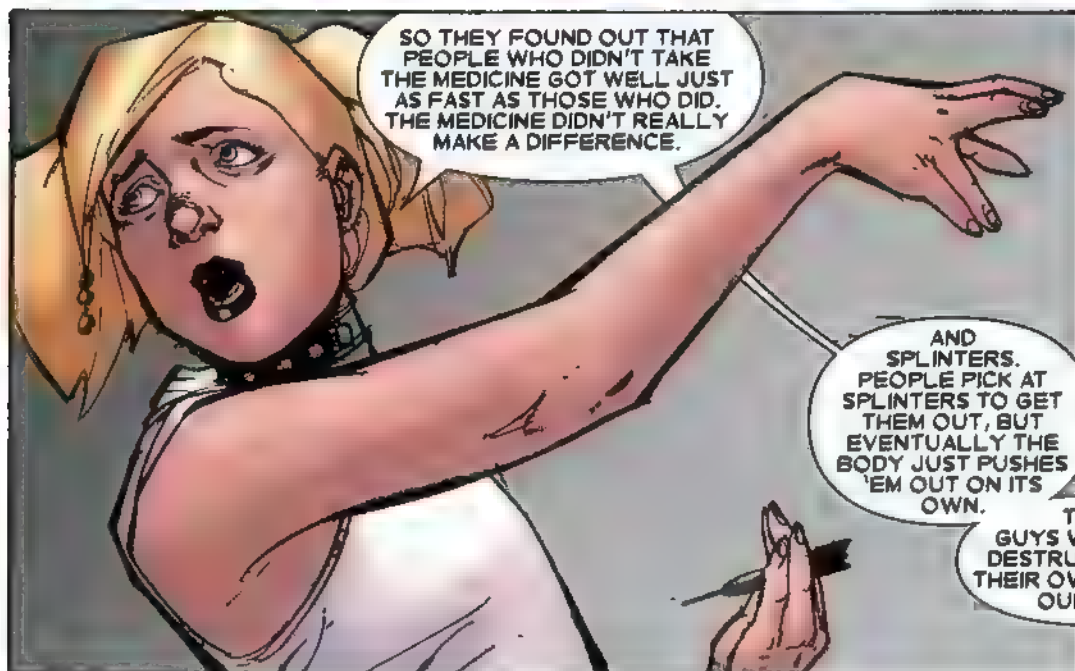
WHAT DO YOU MEAN, "IT'LL TAKE CARE OF ITSELF"?

AND IF YOU WANT THE TRUTH: WE DON'T HAVE TO DO ANYTHING. IT'LL TAKE CARE OF ITSELF.

JUST THAT.

YOU KNOW THEY DID THIS STUDY OF PEOPLE WHO WERE SICK AND TOOK COUGH MEDICINE AND COMPARED THEM TO PEOPLE WHO DIDN'T?

YEAH? SO?



SO THEY FOUND OUT THAT PEOPLE WHO DIDN'T TAKE THE MEDICINE GOT WELL JUST AS FAST AS THOSE WHO DID. THE MEDICINE DIDN'T REALLY MAKE A DIFFERENCE.

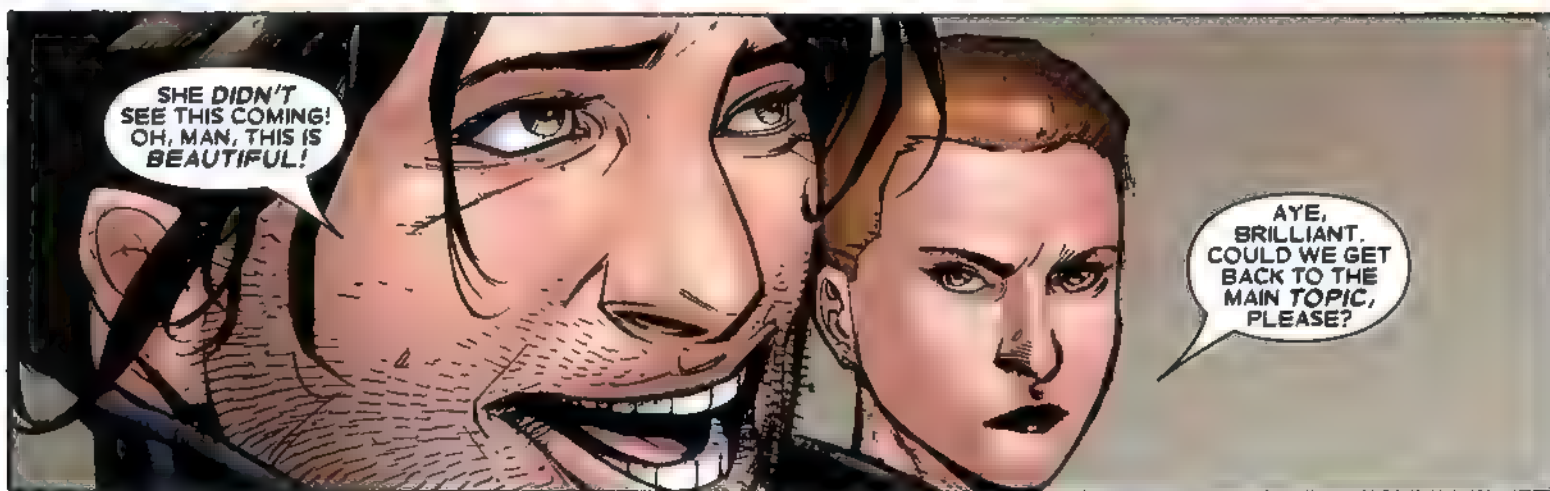
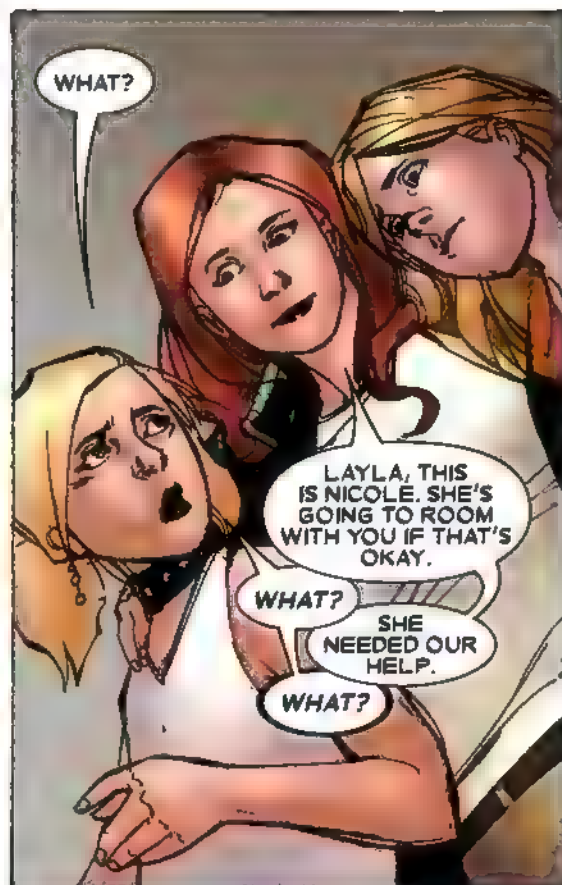
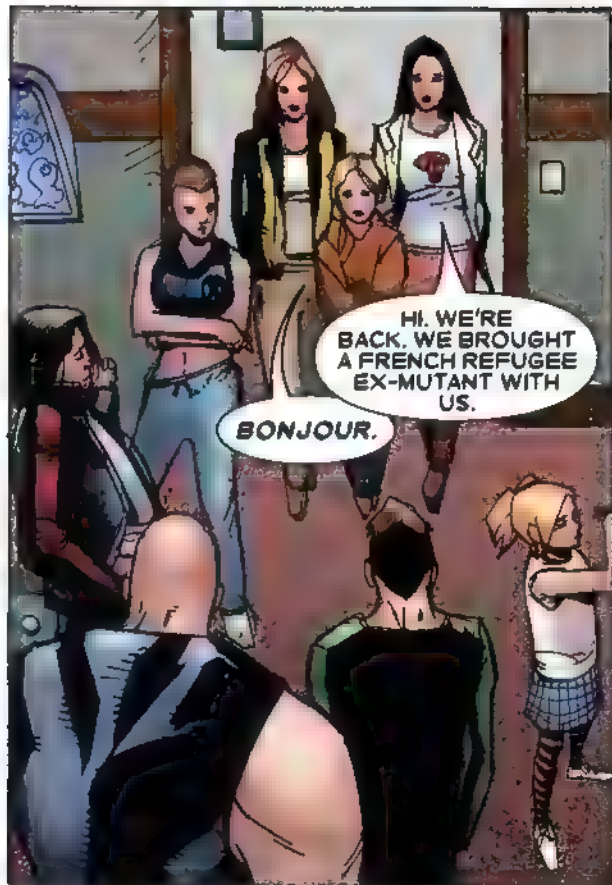
AND SPLINTERS. PEOPLE PICK AT SPLINTERS TO GET THEM OUT, BUT EVENTUALLY THE BODY JUST PUSHES 'EM OUT ON ITS OWN.

THESE GUYS WILL SELF-DESTRUCT ALL ON THEIR OWN WITHOUT OUR HELP.

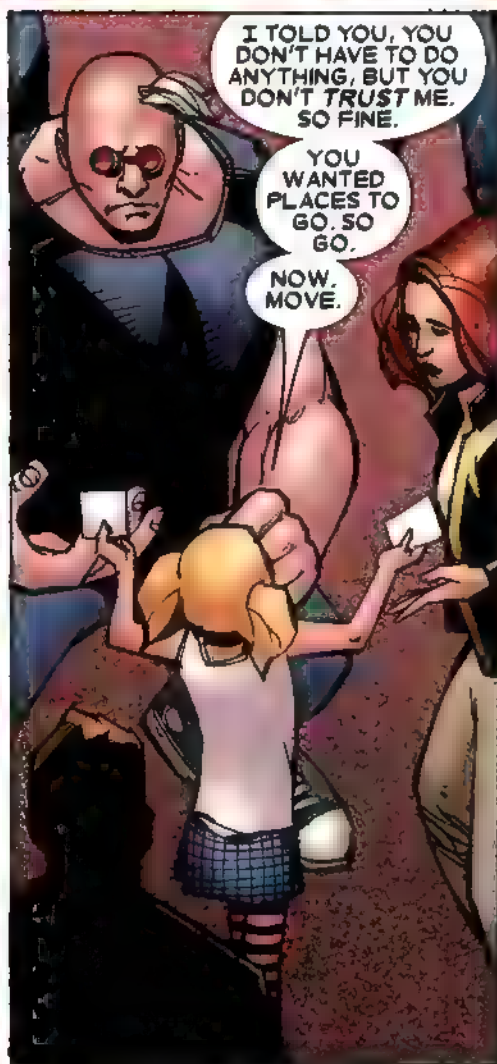
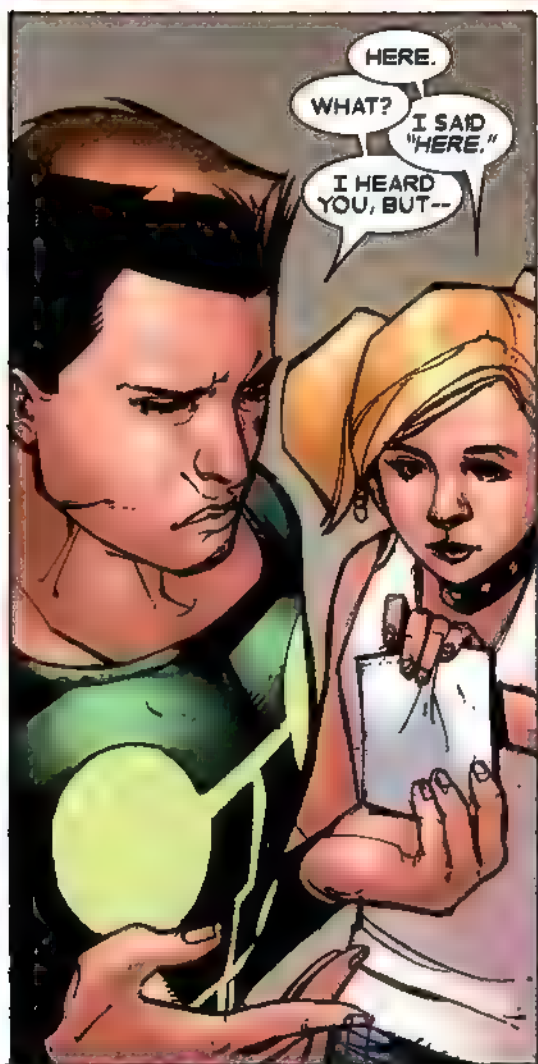
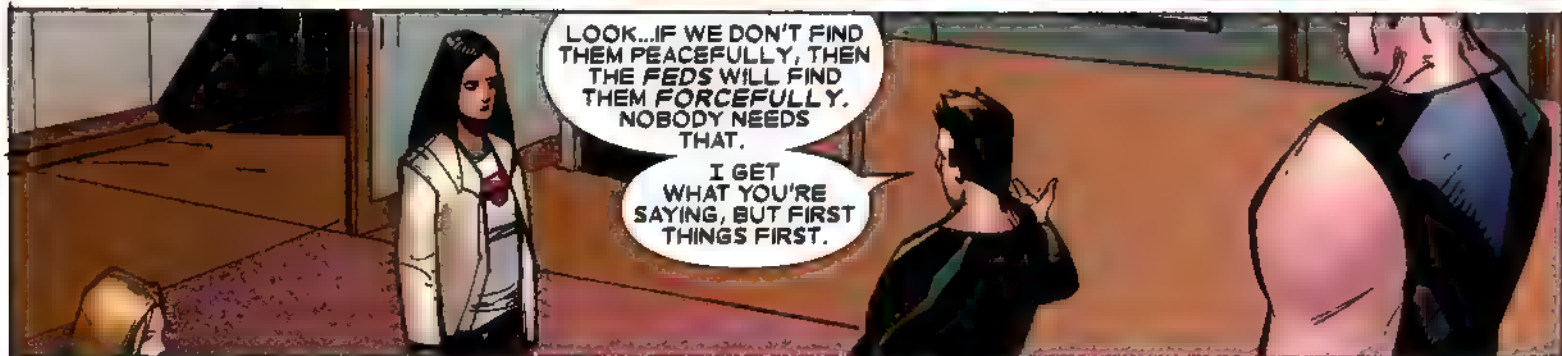
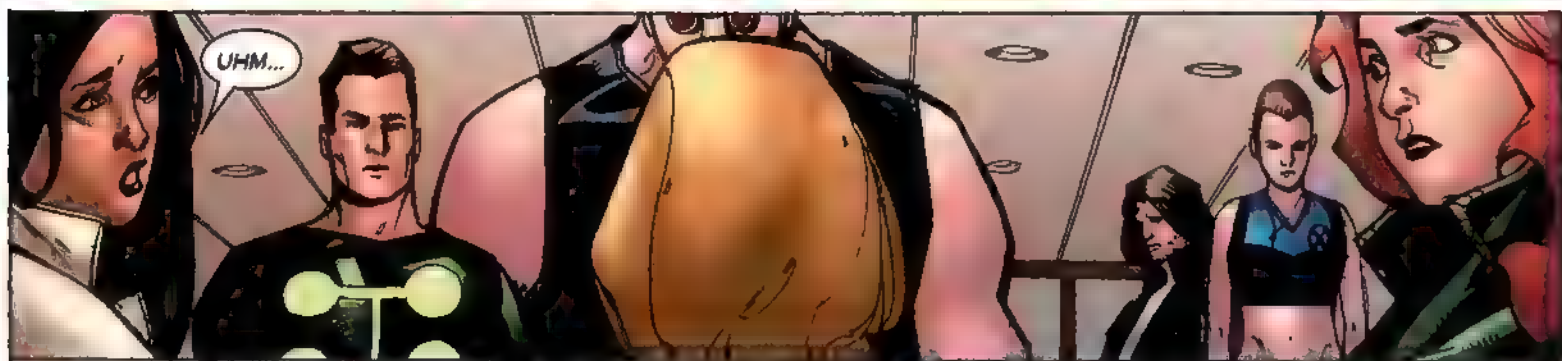
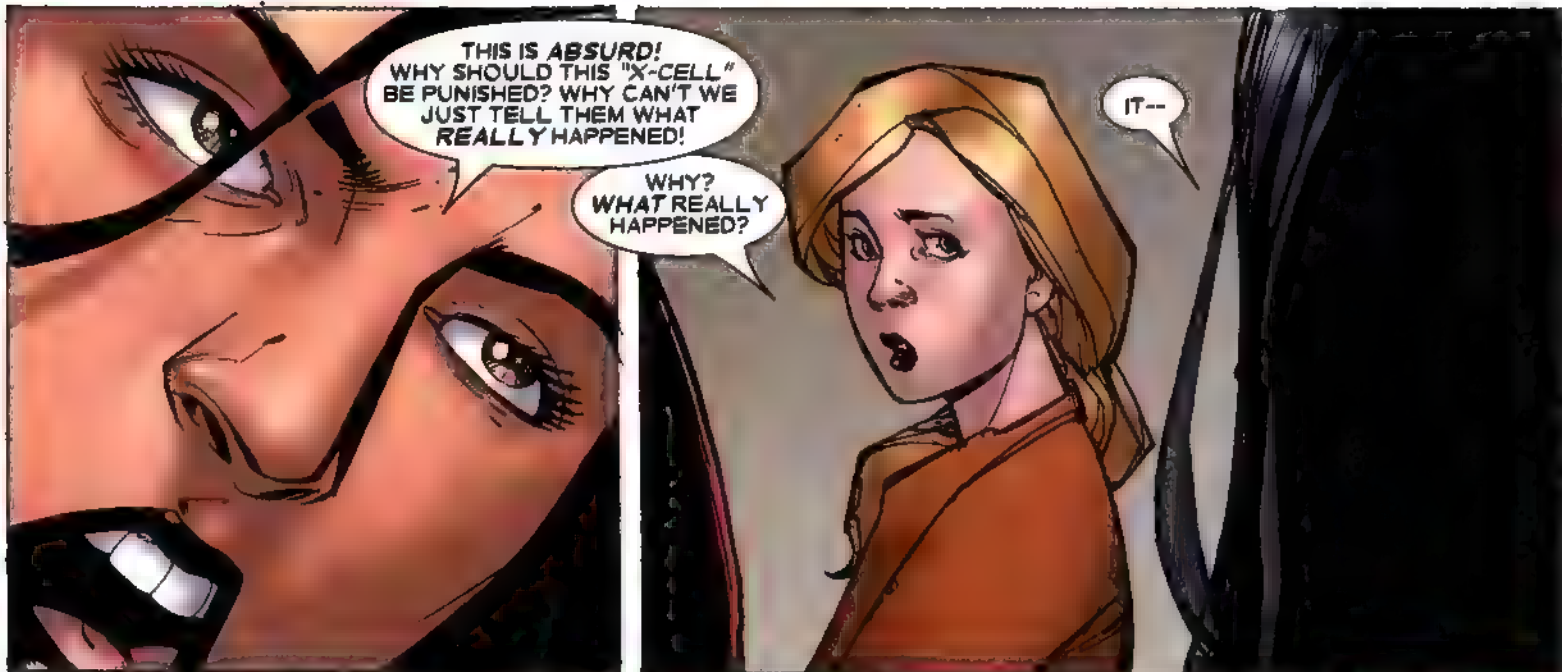


TRUST ME. I'M LAYLA MILLER. I KNOW STUFF.











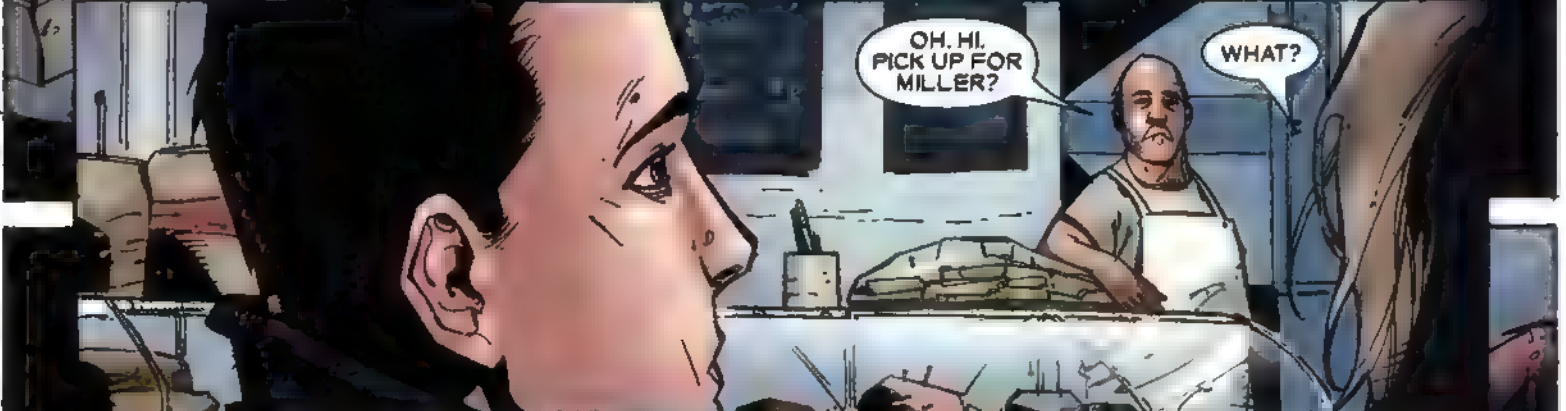


IN A WORLD THAT'S BECOMING INCREASINGLY CYNICAL, IT'S HARD TO WILLINGLY TURN OVER TRUST TO ANOTHER PERSON.

DEEP DOWN, YOU'RE ALWAYS WORRIED THAT SOMEHOW IT'S GOING TO BITE YOU ON THE BACKSIDE.



FREEZE!



OH. HI. PICK UP FOR MILLER?

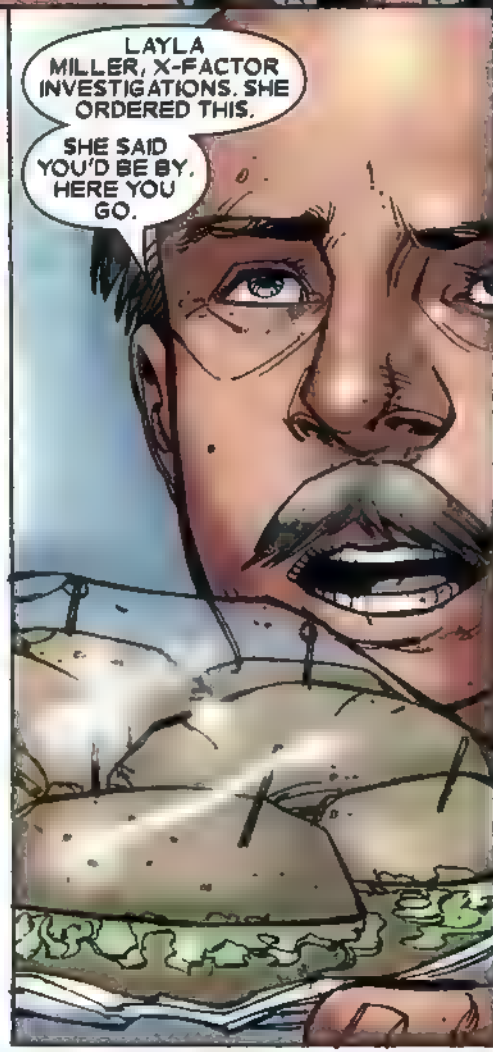
WHAT?



PICK UP FOR...?

YOU FROM X-FACTOR?

UHM... YES.



LAYLA MILLER, X-FACTOR INVESTIGATIONS. SHE ORDERED THIS.

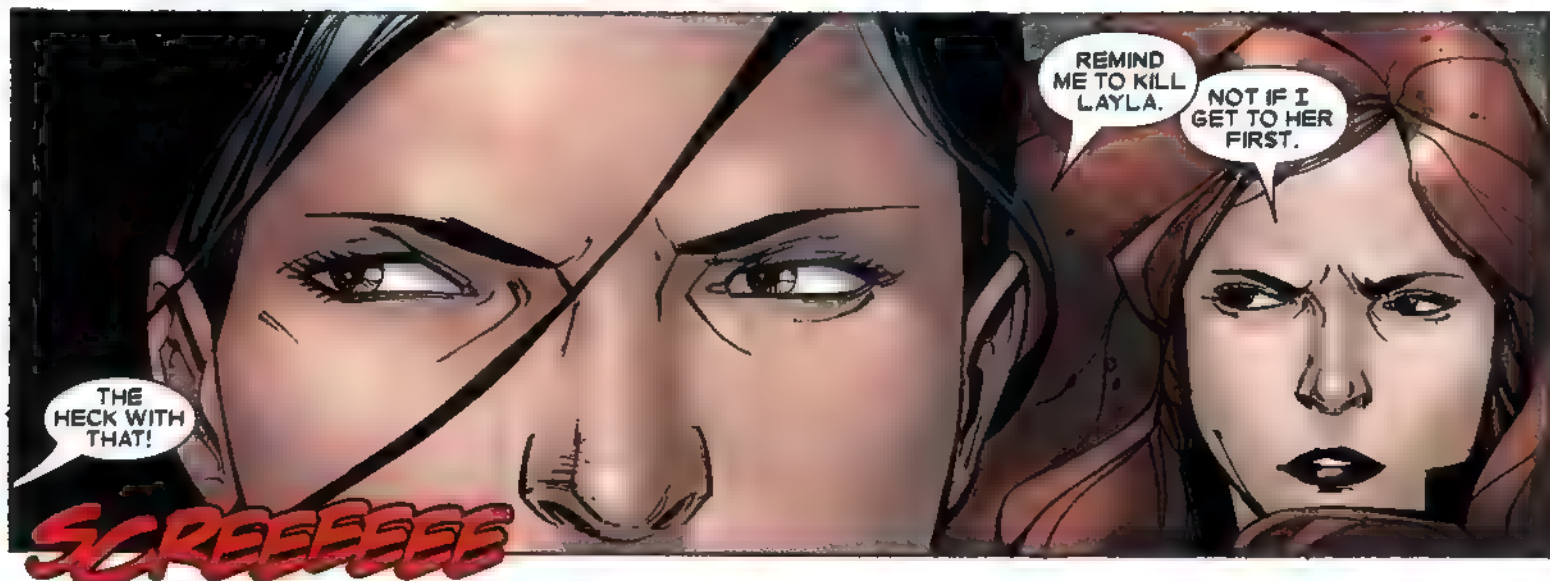
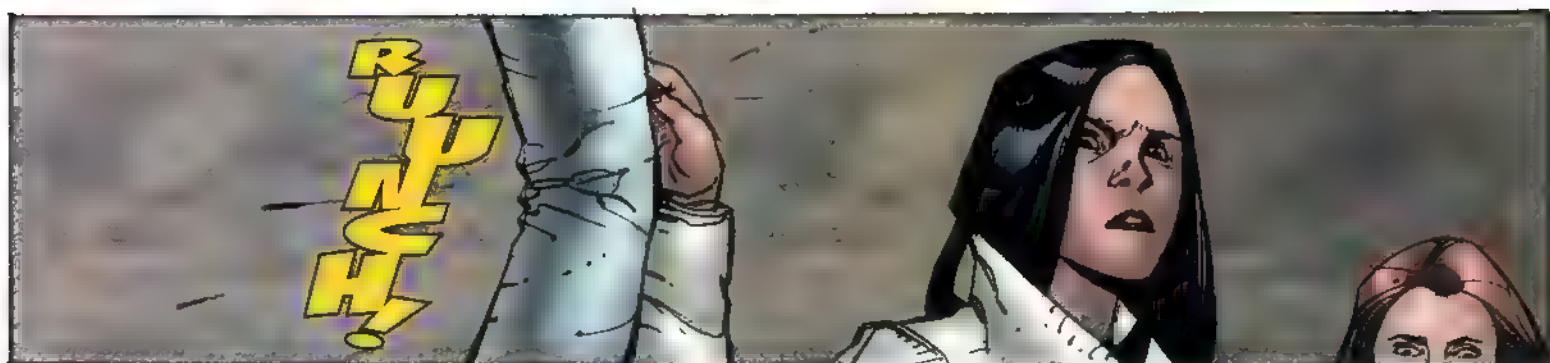
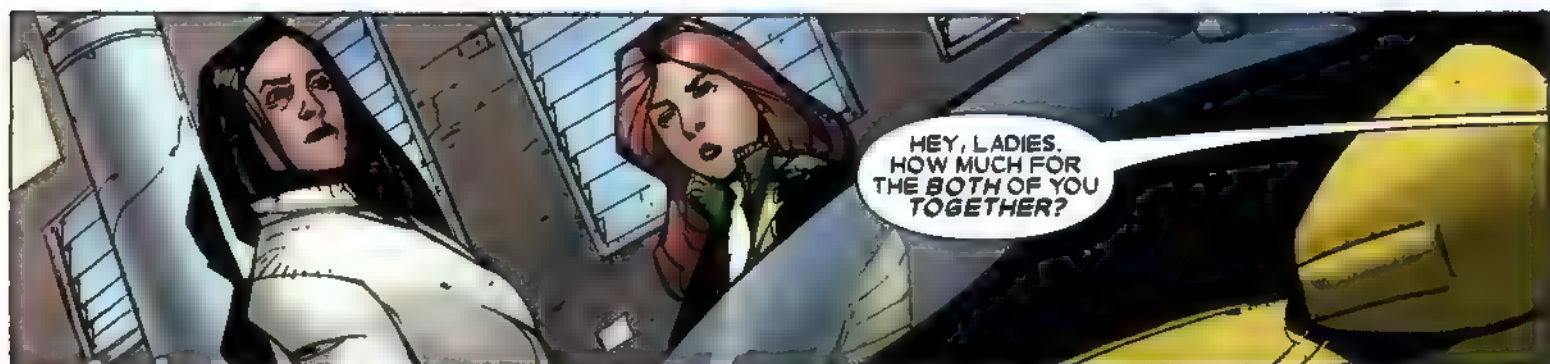
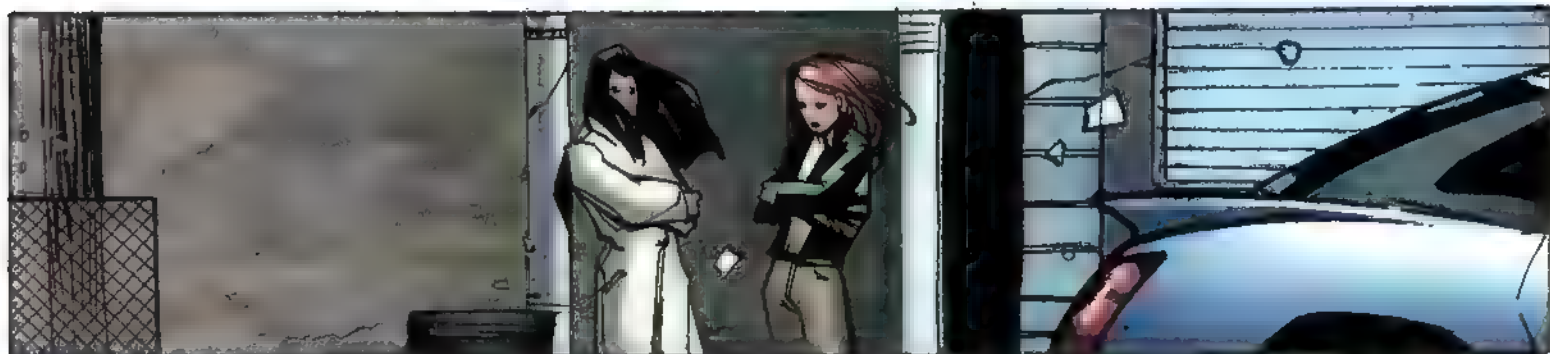
SHE SAID YOU'D BE BY. HERE YOU GO.



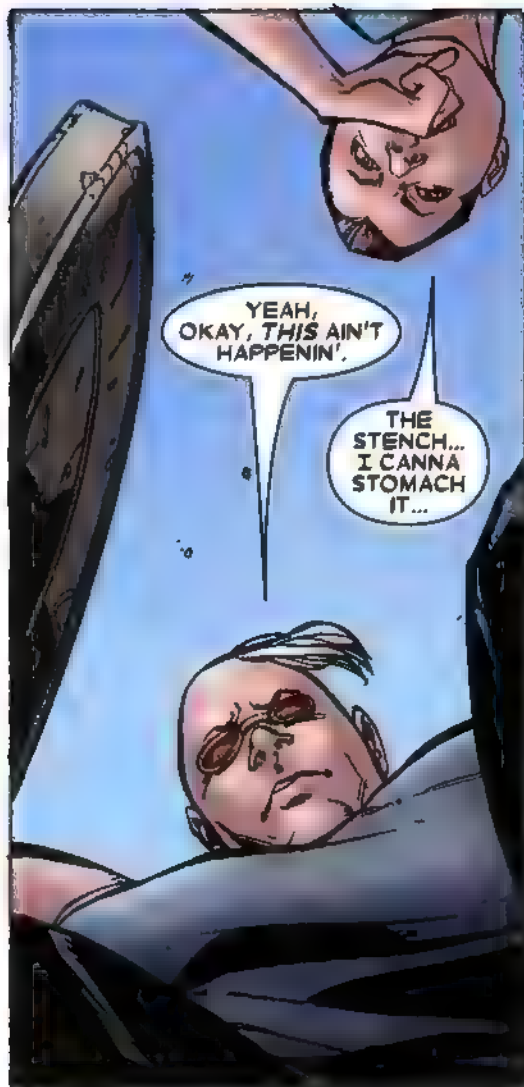
I'LL KILL HER.

OOO! PASTRAMI.









YEAH, OKAY, THIS AIN'T HAPPENIN'.

THE STENCH... I CANNA STOMACH IT...



AND I CAN'T FIT. NO FREAKIN' WAY.

YOU COULD GO DOWN BY YOURSELF...

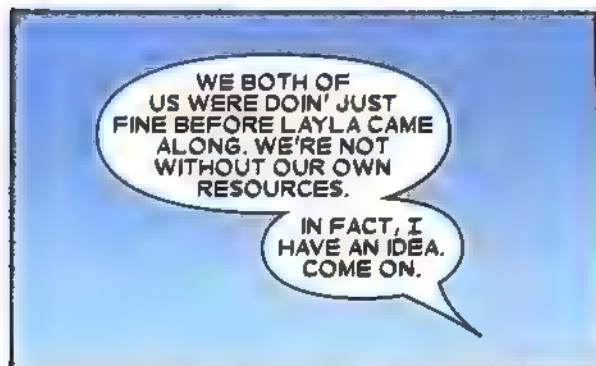
MUH SENSE OF SMELL ALONE'LL KILL ME...

PLEASE, GUIDO, PUT IT BACK...



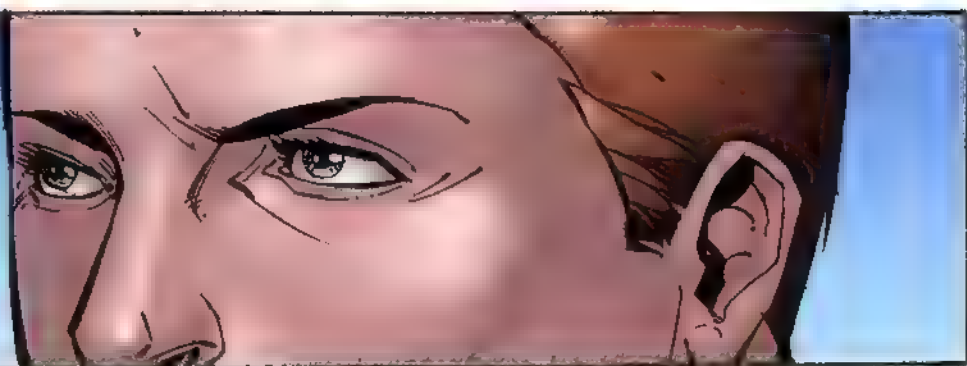
NO ARGUMENT HERE.

BUT...NOW WHAT? IF WE'RE NOT DOIN' WHAT LAYLA SAID TA ON THE NOTE...



WE BOTH OF US WERE DOIN' JUST FINE BEFORE LAYLA CAME ALONG. WE'RE NOT WITHOUT OUR OWN RESOURCES.

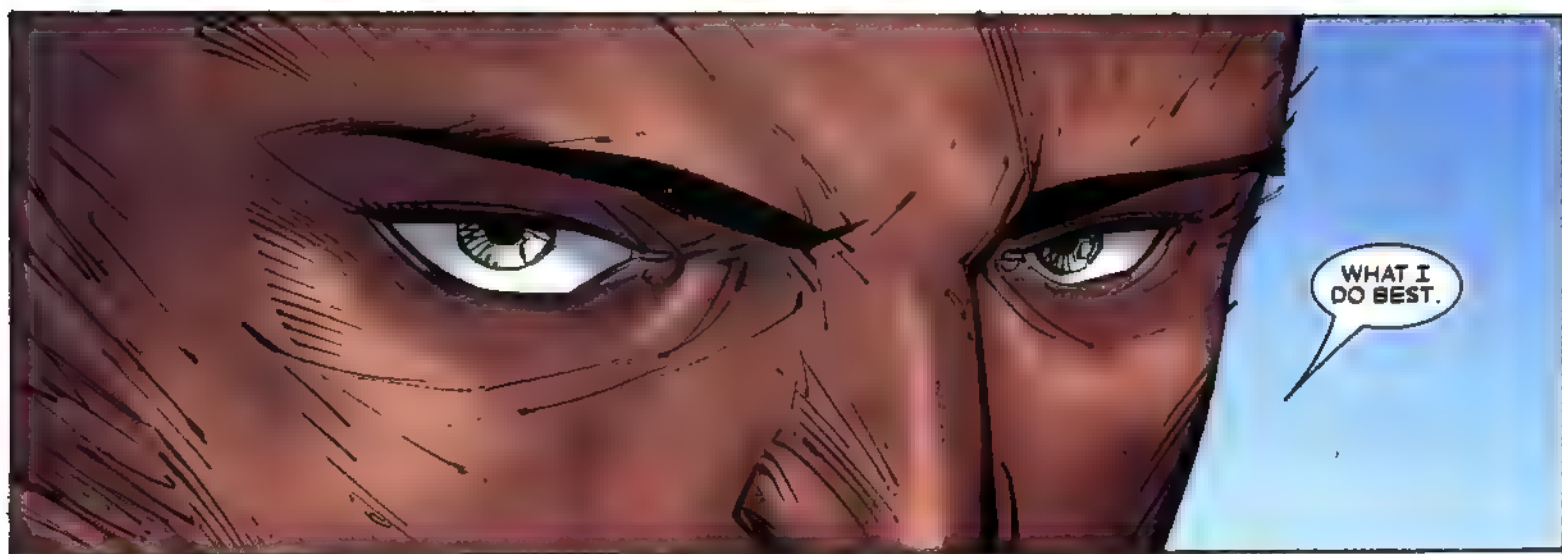
IN FACT, I HAVE AN IDEA. COME ON.



WHERE'RE WE GOIN'?

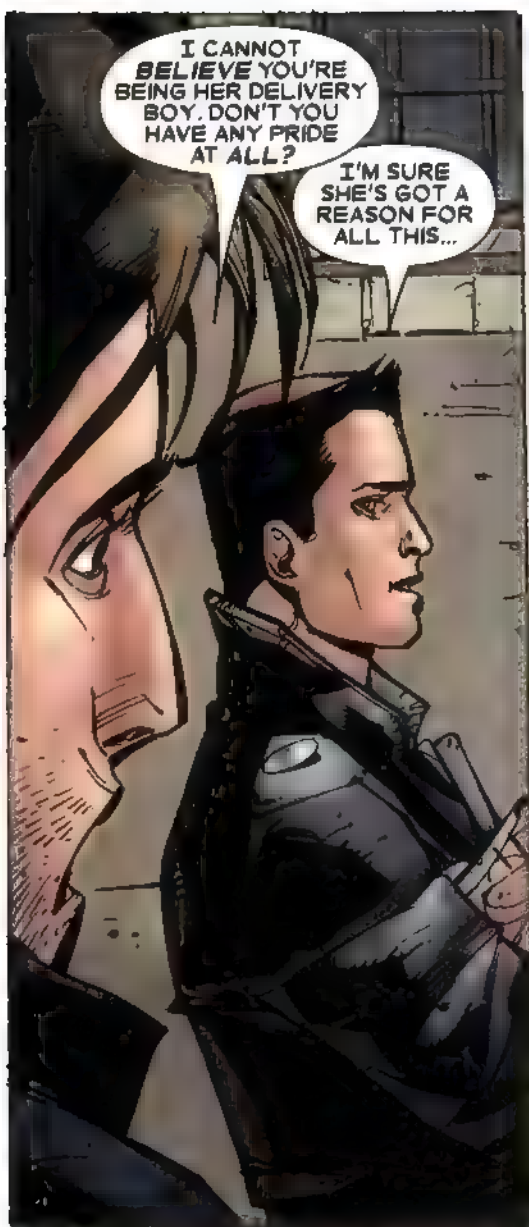
BACK TO THE ALLEY WHERE RICTOR AND I FIRST RAN INTO THE FEDS.

AND WHAT'RE WE GONNA DO THERE?



WHAT I DO BEST.





I CANNOT BELIEVE YOU'RE BEING HER DELIVERY BOY. DON'T YOU HAVE ANY PRIDE AT ALL?

I'M SURE SHE'S GOT A REASON FOR ALL THIS...



MAN, WHAT'S IT TAKE FOR YOU TO KNOW WHEN YOU'RE BEING--

HEY, YOU.



ME?

GIMME SOME OF THAT FOOD.

Y'ASK ME, MAN, YOU COULD STAND T'LOSE A FEW POUNDS.

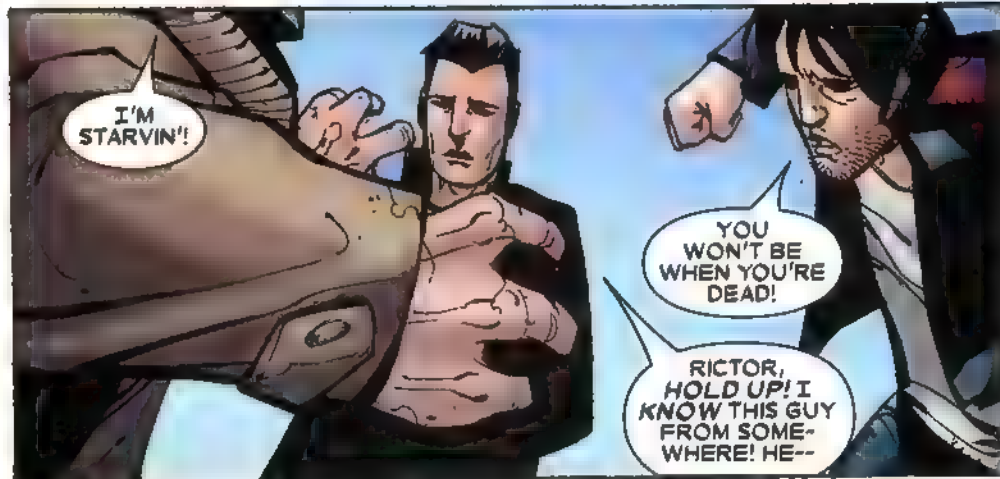
NOBODY ASKED YOU, YA DUMB TAMALES TOSSER.



WHAT? WHAT DID YOU CALL ME?

RIC, CALM DOWN.

YOU CALM DOWN! ME, I'M GONNA HAND HIM HIS SPLEEN!



I'M STARVIN'!

YOU WON'T BE WHEN YOU'RE DEAD!

RICTOR, HOLD UP! I KNOW THIS GUY FROM SOMEWHERE! HE--



I SAID GIMME!









HUNGRY?  
GREAT!

HERE'S  
A KNUCKLE  
SANDWICH!



"HERE'S A KNUCKLE  
SANDWICH?" OH,  
HONESTLY!

WHAT? IT  
WAS A TOUGH  
GUY JOKE!

IT COULD  
WORKIE FOR  
BOGIE, DARLING,  
BUT NOT YOU.



GET THAT IDIOT  
OUTTA MY FACE,  
MADROX!

AND YOU! LEMME  
GUESS: YOU'RE ONE  
OF THE X-CELL,  
AREN'T'CHA?

N-NEVER  
HEARD OF  
'EM!

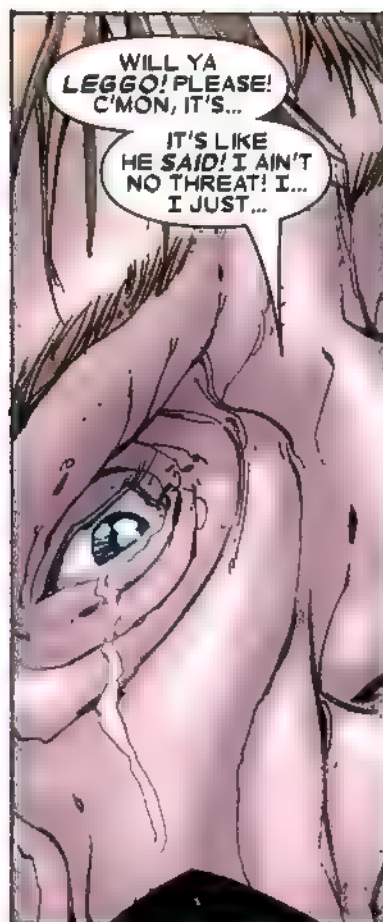


I ABSORB THE DUPE. RICTOR,  
MEANTIME, CONTINUES TO SLAM THE  
BLOB AGAINST THE WALL. I ALMOST  
FEEL SORRY FOR THE POOR SLOB.

WRONG  
ANSWER!

RICTOR, GO  
EASY ON THE GUY.  
CAN'T YOU SEE HE'S  
HELPLESS?

NEITHER OF  
US GOT ANY POWERS,  
MADROX! BUT ONE OF  
US IS BEIN' A MAN  
ABOUT IT!



WILL YA  
LEGGO! PLEASE!  
C'MON, IT'S...

IT'S LIKE  
HE SAID! I AIN'T  
NO THREAT! I...  
I JUST...



FIGURES. HE'S  
SLUBBERING.

GOTTA  
ADMIRE THE  
CONSISTENCY.





RICTOR MAKES DEEP, PUKING NOISES. I CAN PRACTICALLY SEE THE PAIN EXPLODING BEHIND HIS EYES.

THIS ONE'S ON ME. HE BACKED OFF AT MY INSISTENCE AND NOW HE'S DOUBLED OVER IN AGONY.

WELL, LET'S SEE HOW BLOBBO LIKES IT WHEN--

DAMMIT, DUKES! YOU WERE SUPPOSED TO KEEP A LOW PROFILE!

I WAS HUNGRY.

GOD ALMIGHTY.

FATALE!

AN ASSASSIN. USED TO BE PART OF A GROUP CALLED THE DARK DESCENDANTS.

DEPOWERED, BUT STILL A THREAT.





MULTIPLE  
MAN!

WHAT  
TIPPED YOU  
OFF?

NOW, NOW,  
MY CHILD...VIOLENCE  
IS NOT TO BE FOUND  
ON THE PATH OF  
ENLIGHTENMENT...



GET OUT  
OF MY WAY,  
YOU--

EH?

I SEE  
THAT YOU NEED  
PERSUASION TO  
FOLLOW THE  
PATH,

VERY WELL.  
TRUST ME WHEN I  
SAY THAT I LOVE  
YOU, SOMETIMES,  
HOWEVER...



...LOVE  
HURTS.

EEYARRRH!

I HEAR  
THE ARM BREAK FROM  
SEVERAL FEET AWAY.

HE'S SO CALM ABOUT  
IT...DISPASSIONATE. WHAT  
PART OF ME IS THAT?

I DON'T KNOW WHETHER  
TO TAKE PRIDE IN IT OR  
BE FREAKED OUT BY IT.

SHE'S HOWLING SO LOUDLY  
THAT IT DROWNS OUT THE  
SOUND OF THE BLADE SNAPPING  
OUT OF HER GAUNTLET.

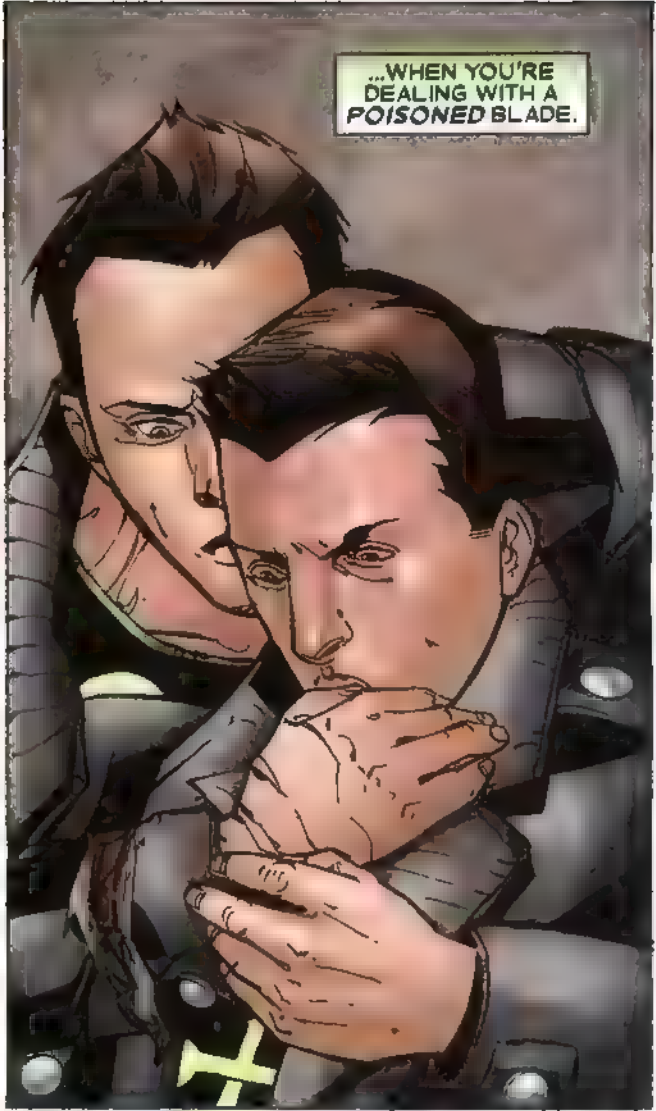


AS A RESULT, NEITHER  
OF US HEARS IT UNTIL  
IT'S TOO LATE.

HE MOVES QUICKLY AND  
AVOIDS A DEEP WOUND.  
BUT THE SUPERFICIAL CUT  
IS MORE THAN ENOUGH...



...WHEN YOU'RE  
DEALING WITH A  
POISONED BLADE.



GET  
IN!

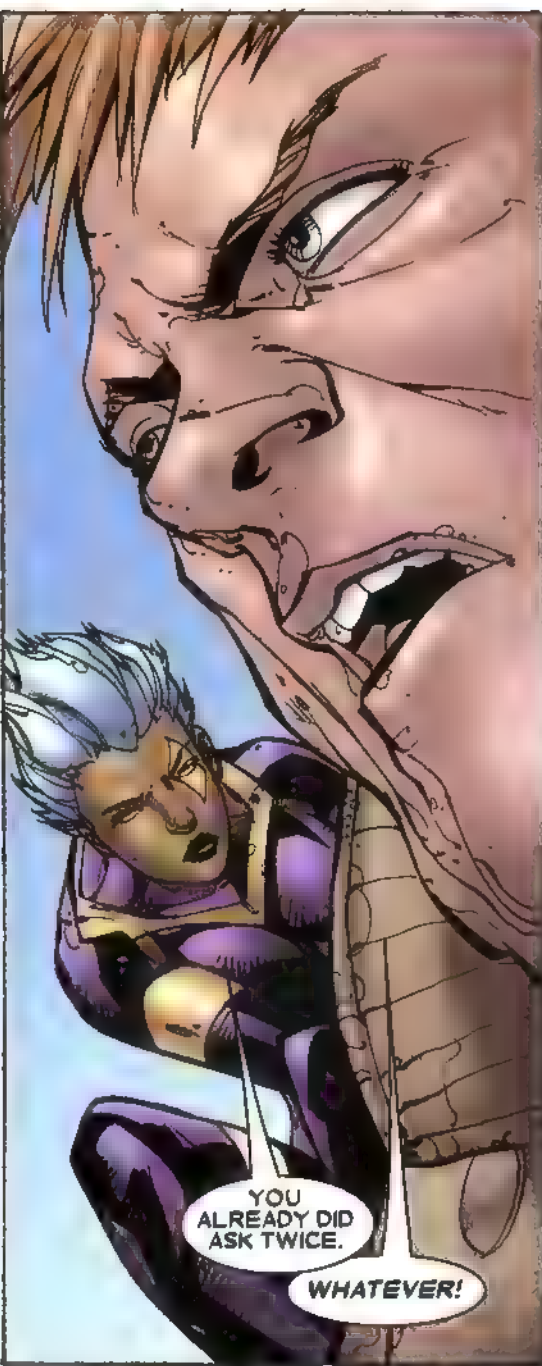
WHERE  
DID YOU GET  
THAT?

BOUGHT IT  
ON LAYAWAY!  
WHERE THE HELL  
DO YOU THINK?  
NOW GET IN! DON'T  
MAKE ME ASK  
TWICE!



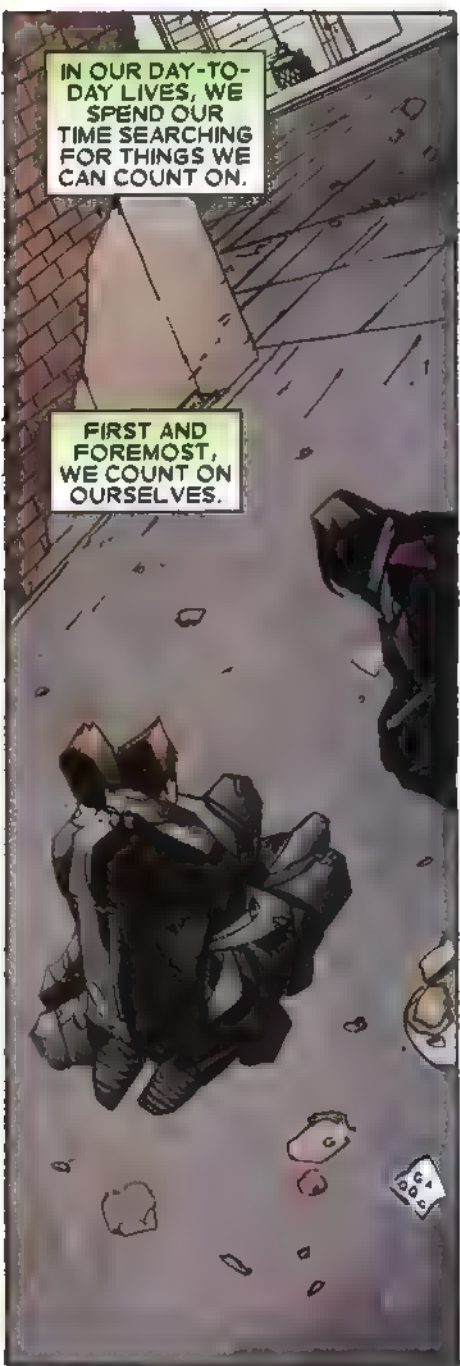
YOU  
ALREADY DID  
ASK TWICE.

WHATEVER!



IN OUR DAY-TO-  
DAY LIVES, WE  
SPEND OUR  
TIME SEARCHING  
FOR THINGS WE  
CAN COUNT ON.

FIRST AND  
FOREMOST,  
WE COUNT ON  
OURSELVES.







SECOND COMES  
OUR FRIENDS...



...OR TEAMMATES, IF  
WE'RE LUCKY ENOUGH  
TO HAVE ANY.



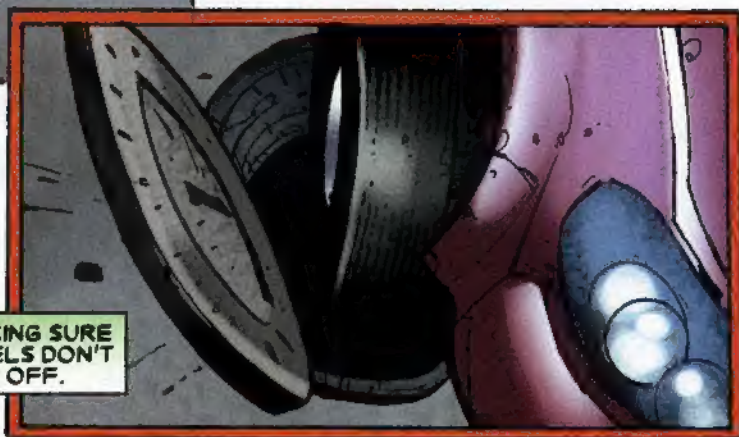
WE TRUST THAT THEY'LL  
PICK UP THE SLACK IF  
THE ROPE SLIPS OUT OF  
OUR HANDS.



AND THEN, OF  
COURSE, THERE  
COMES TRUST IN  
FATE...DIVINE  
PROVIDENCE...



...SOME ALL-  
KNOWING ENTITY  
WHO'S WATCHING  
OUT FOR US...



...AND MAKING SURE  
THE WHEELS DON'T  
COME OFF.







# X-FACTOR

Greetings from X-Central. Your humble writer here, and I have to say that the past couple of months have been extremely gratifying. I've been doing quite a bit of convention-hopping, and by far X-FACTOR is the title that the most people have been coming up to me and saying that they're grooving on. It's much appreciated by the entire X-FACTOR team. And now, your letters—edited, as always, for length but not content.

X-Factory,  
Another flawless issue? Geez. It is interesting that Rahne pointed out how 99% of the time everything is exactly as it appears, because that really is the case with X-FACTOR. We saw Pietro and "Elijah" interacting at the end of the issue, and it looked very sinister indeed - so I'm willing to bet cash money that it will be.

And, of course, there's Layla - she appears to be a horrible, disgusting, monstrous little thing, and we've seen plenty of evidence to support that, too.

Until we learn that Rahne is actually just a very hairy vampire, MAKE MINE MADROX!

Adrian J. Watts  
Melbourne, Australia

Hey...Andy Schmidt. Yeah, I'm talking to you, Schmidt. Who was it? Come on, spill it. Who in the X-office blabbed about the upcoming Rahne-revealed-to-be-a-vampire storyline? The major reveal that was going to form the entire underpinning of the upcoming mega-crossover later this year? Here we're trying to keep things under wraps, and freakin' Adrian in freakin' Australia knows all about it. Great. Just great. Now we're back to square one. I hope you're all happy.

Dear X-FACTOR,  
Firstly, I must say I love the book - right from the first issue it has been

awesome. However, there is one thing that I am disappointed with: When can I get a Jamie Madrox long-sleeve shirt? I really want one of the shirts that he wears in the comics. The green long-sleeve shirt with the logo that looks yellow sometimes and light green sometimes (I like the yellow better). I looked all over but nobody sells them and as far as I know, nobody makes them. Please, please can you do something to change this! I would love a shirt and I'm sure lots of other people would as well. Anyways as far as the comics go, keep up the good work.

Brian McDonald  
(via the Internet)

Long-sleeved shirts, Brian? Nope, not that I've seen. Now I have seen t-shirts manufactured by an outfit called [www.mutant-america.com](http://www.mutant-america.com). In fact, at the New York Comic Con just this past February there was a pair of identical twins walking around wearing the t-shirts and trench coats. If I had a picture of them, we'd run it. And speaking of running pictures, hey, guys...still haven't seen any Madrox onesies or baby tees for Andy Schmidt's future offspring. Heck, I still remember the days when Wolverine was engaged to be married and enthusiastic fans sent engagement gifts. Don't tell me today's fans can't do nearly as well to fete the upcoming event, especially when it's not even fictional!

Dear X-FACTOR,

I cannot thank you enough for writing such a thoughtful story in issue #16. I am an Episcopal priest myself and Jamie Madrox has become one of my favorite characters, so to see Jamie & John's "dilemma" was a treat. But more than that, it was so good to see a religious character depicted in such a way. Usually, religious folk are portrayed as fanatical, or strict, or "holier-than-thou." John Maddocks was refreshingly real. A

faithful person, sent to learn what he can about religion, and who finds the truest meaning in the bonds of his family life. I imagined what I would do if a duplicate of myself walked through the doors of my church, hoping to reabsorb me, and the sorrow that John experienced became so real.

On the other side, Jamie's character is only deepened by his acceptance of this dupe to continue what he's doing as a priest and as a husband and father.

Also, thank you for writing a piece that was theologically sound. Instead of John or Jamie raging at God because of this predicament, you kept the story within the bounds of a stewardship sermon, no less. Nothing is ours, not even our lives. What right do we have in taking another person's?

Keep up the great work.

Peace,

The Rev. Jeff Jackson  
Savannah, GA

You too, Reverend. Keep the faith.

-PAD

## NEXT ISSUE:



The "X-Cell" revealed!

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